OP-ED: It’s Time to Regulate India’s ₹60,000 Crore Astrology Industry Before More Lives are Ruined

By: The Digital Consumer Watchdog Group **Target Publication:** Major National Dailies (e.g., The Hindu, Times of India, Indian Express)

If a financial advisor promises to double your money in a month and runs away with your savings, the law is clear: it is fraud. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will intervene, bank accounts will be frozen, and arrests will be made.

But what happens when an online astrologer promises to cure your depression, bring back your estranged spouse, or secure you a job, takes ₹6 Lakh for a "guaranteed ritual," and then blocks your number?

In India today, the answer is usually: absolutely nothing.

Welcome to the ₹60,000 crore digital astrology industry—a booming, highly optimized corporate machine that operates in a massive regulatory blind spot. As smartphones penetrate every corner of the country, ancient traditions have been repackaged into slick apps and Instagram reels. But behind the veneer of spiritual guidance lies a predatory business model that weaponizes human vulnerability.

Over the past year, our organization, The Digital Consumer Watchdog Group, has analyzed thousands of consumer complaints. The patterns are chillingly consistent.

First is the "Bait and Switch." Platforms heavily market the faces of famous "master" astrologers. Desperate consumers pay premium tariffs—sometimes up to ₹8,000 for a 15-minute phone call—expecting expert guidance. Instead, as seen in numerous complaints against platforms like Lunar Astro, they are handed off to anonymous, junior practitioners who deliver generic, script-like readings. When consumers complain about the lack of professionalism, they are ignored or blamed.

Second, and far more insidious, is the psychological manipulation. People seek astrology when they are in crisis. Scammers know this. Instead of offering comfort, they allegedly diagnose terrifying "doshas," curses, or negative past-life karma. They manufacture panic, only to immediately offer the cure: an expensive gemstone or a premium puja. This is not spiritual counseling; it is extortion by fear.

Third is the illusion of consensus. How do these apps maintain 4.9-star ratings? Through the industrial-scale purchase of fake reviews and bot followers. Genuine victims who try to warn others find their reviews buried or deleted.

We must separate the right to practice faith from the right to commit corporate fraud. Astrology is a matter of personal belief, but deceptive marketing, bait-and-switch pricing, and psychological extortion are consumer rights violations.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs must step in. We need mandatory disclosure laws requiring platforms to verify the identity and qualifications of their practitioners. We need strict bans on marketing "guaranteed" outcomes for health and wealth. And we need a dedicated grievance redressal mechanism for victims of astro-fraud.

Until we regulate the commerce of faith, millions of vulnerable Indians will continue to look to the stars for hope, only to have their pockets emptied by scammers hiding behind a screen.